



## WOUNDED WARRIOR

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2015 Edition, Issue 4 - April 2015

## 2015 Warrior Games are taking place at Quantico

WASHINGTON -- The Defense Department's Warrior Games 2015 will take place June 19-28 at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, according to a DOD news release issued March 16.

The DOD Warrior Games is an annual sporting competition bringing together wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans from across the country, according to the release.

This is the first year that the department is organizing the games, which were previously run by the U.S. Olympic Committee and held at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

DOD Warrior Games 2015 will feature eight sporting events with about 200 athletes representing teams from the Marine Corps, Army, Navy, and Air Force, the release said. Each military service hosts trials in the months leading up to the games to determine their teams.

Adaptive sports and athletic reconditioning activities play a fundamental role in recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of service members back to their units, or as they transition into the civilian environment, according to the release.

"The courage, strength and skill of our warrior athletes and their families inspire their fellow servicemen and women, and Americans everywhere," Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Jessica Wright said in the release. "Everyone in the Department of Defense looks forward to celebrating the athletes' accomplishments before, during and after June's competition."

In 2011, DOD officials created the Military Adaptive Sports Program to enhance warrior recovery by engaging wounded, ill and injured service members in ongoing, daily adaptive activities, based on

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#### Send your comments, feedback

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550 C. St. West  
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, TX  
78150-4739

1-800-581-9437  
Fax: (210) 565-3385/DSN 665-3385

Visit: [www.woundedwarrior.af.mil](http://www.woundedwarrior.af.mil)

E-mail: [wounded.warrior@us.af.mil](mailto:wounded.warrior@us.af.mil)

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# Going forward:

## Airman conquers new path toward new life

by Senior Airman Jordan Castelan  
3<sup>rd</sup> Combat Camera Squadron

LAS VEGAS -- Aim high ... fly ... fight ... win, an ideology all American Airmen strive to adhere to, words ingrained into the mindsets of enlisted Airmen from the day they become a trainee.

But what happens to those who suffer a debilitating injury, a traumatic experience or a life-altering experience, and how do they set out to conquer the new path that lies in front of them?

Airman 1st Class Rachel Hartless is a medical materiel technician from the 88th Medical Logistics Squadron at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, who was diagnosed with Stage Two working Hodgkin lymphoma.

"Everything in my life changed," said Hartless. "All of a sudden I started to constantly worry, had to constantly check my body, I lost sight of my life, I felt numb and out of control."

Eventually Hartless discovered the Air Force's Wounded Warrior Program. A program designed on ensuring wounded and seriously ill Airmen receive professional, individualized guidance and support to help them successfully navigate their way through the complex process of transitioning out of the Air Force and returning to civilian life or continuing on with their military careers.

Now an athlete and active participant in the program, Hartless made the decision to attend

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*Everything in my life changed. All of a sudden I started to constantly worry...*

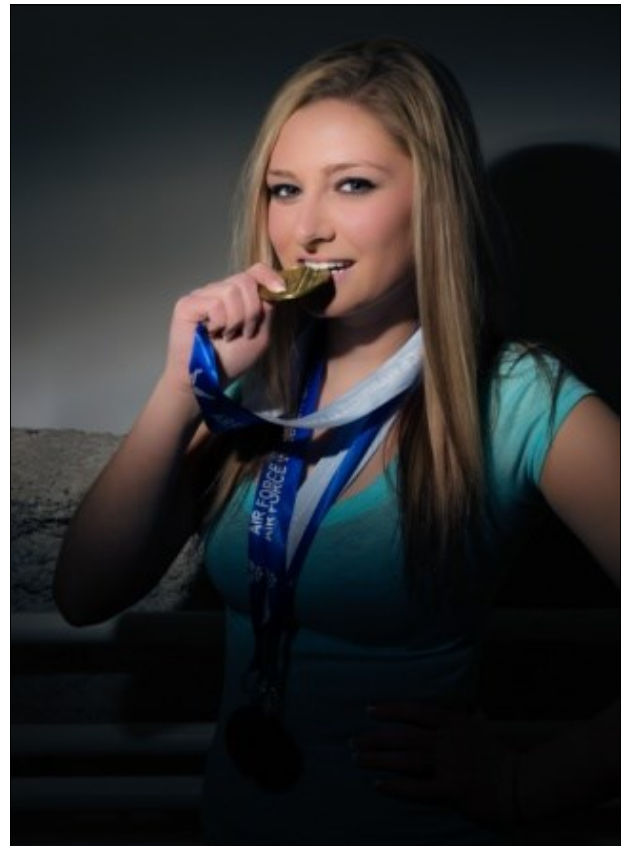
Airman 1st Class Rachel Hartless

”

and compete in the 2015 Air Force Wounded Warrior Trials at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

"I didn't realize how much help I truly needed until I came here," she said. "I didn't have time to heal, for myself to recover, or know how to.

"You arrive here and you're instantly surrounded by people with similar struggles and strife," Hartless continued. "Maybe no one at home



Airman 1st Class Rachel Hartless, an 88th Medical Squadron medical materiel technician, bites into the gold medal she won during the Air Force Wounded Warrior Trials 2015 in Las Vegas on March 1. The trials are an adaptive sports event designed to promote the mental and physical well-being of seriously ill and injured military members and veterans. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Jordan Castelan)

truly understands what you're going through but, when you're here, everyone stands on common ground."

Hartless wasn't the only one to see improvements, said Steve Otero, Air Force Wounded Warrior Program communication coordinator. Many of the athletes leave the trials surprised by how much they've grown, accomplished and learned.

Leaving the competition, Hartless mentioned she is bringing back nothing but self-gains.

"I didn't believe in myself when it [the lymphoma and the games] all started," said Hartless. "Then I found

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# VA works to expand program eligibility

WASHINGTON -- Department of Veterans Affairs officials announced March 24 that VA is changing the calculation used to determine the distance between a veteran's residence and the nearest VA medical facility from a straight line distance to driving distance. This action will expand eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program.

The policy change is being made through regulatory action in the coming weeks. The Veterans Choice Program was authorized by the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.

"VA has worked very quickly to implement the Veterans Choice Program and we

appreciate the constructive feedback shared by veterans and our partners to help us improve service to veterans," said Secretary Robert McDonald. "We've determined that changing the distance calculation will help ensure more veterans have access to care when and where they want it. VA looks forward to the ongoing support of our partners as we continue to make improvements to this new program."

The method of determining driving distance will be through distance as calculated by using a commercial product. The change is expected to roughly double the number of eligible veterans.

The Veterans Choice

Program is a new, temporary benefit that allows eligible veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program should call 866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. Since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect Nov. 5, 2014, more than 45,000 medical appointments have been scheduled.

Using expanded authorities from the act, VA continues to expand access to care through increased staffing and enhanced collaboration with

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## End sequestration or lose tomorrow's fight

by Staff Sgt. Torri Ingalsbe  
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (AFRNS) -- The devastating effects of continued sequestration-level funding were the topic of discussion during a House Armed Services Committee hearing with the senior leaders of all military branches March 17.

"I believe sequestration is going to place American lives at greater risk both at home and abroad," said Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James. "In fact, if sequestration remains the law of the land, we will not, in the United States Air Force, simultaneously be able to defeat an adversary in one part of the world, deny a second adversary the objectives they seek in a second part of the world, as well as defend the homeland. That, of course, is our national strategy, and I'm telling you we won't be able to do it under sequestration."

The service secretaries and chiefs were asked by members of the committee to "speak plainly" about the strain of sequestration-level funding and the future impacts it will have.



Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Mark A. Welsh III answers a budget question posed to him during a House Armed Services Committee hearing March 17 on Capitol Hill in Washington. Next to Welsh is Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James. (U.S. Air Force photo/Jim Varhegyi)

"The fundamental issue is going to be that the American people cannot expect their military to do what we've been asked to do in the past, if we stay at these funding levels," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III.

While all services are seeking different funding levels to invest in

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## Services and Resources

[National Career Fairs](#) has a comprehensive listing of career fairs throughout the country to help America get back to work. With more than 300 fairs in 76 cities, people can search by city, state or ZIP code. The website also offers advice on how to get the most out of attending a career fair, links to various career blogs, and the opportunity to upload resume. For more information, click [here](#).



The National Resource Directory has a section dedicated to resources especially for family and caregiver support. Topics covering the importance of respite breaks and watching out for signs of depression, to community support services, to education and scholarship opportunities are available. For more information, click [here](#).

[SongwritingWith:Soldiers](#) uses songwriting as a catalyst for positive change. It offers participants a unique way to tell their stories, rebuild trust, release pain, and forge new bonds. In SW:S retreat and workshop settings, service members and veterans are paired with professional songwriters to craft songs about their experiences, often about combat and the return home. Through their songs, participants rediscover their creativity and reconnect with family, friends, and communities. The songs are recorded and shared through CDs, concerts, and social media in order to bridge the divide between military and civilian communities, and build awareness of the challenges faced by returning service members. For more information, click [here](#).



SongwritingWith:Soldiers

## TRICARE offers new appointment reminder

FALLS CHURCH, Va. -- New TRICARE Online, or TOL, enhancements allow people to schedule text and email appointment reminders for all appointments, regardless of the booking mechanism.

Whether booked via TOL, a military hospital or clinic's appointment call center, in person at the military hospital or clinic, or via Composite Health Care System personnel, text and email reminders can be scheduled to help manage family's medical appointments.

The appointment reminders are easy to set up, said officials. Just log in to TOL with a Common Access Card, Premium Department of Defense Self-Service logon, or Defense Finance and Accounting Service myPay logon and define up to three email addresses and mobile phone numbers. People will receive a confirmation message when booking the appointment, as well as a reminder up to 48-72 hours before the scheduled appointment time, and again, two hours before the scheduled appointment time.



For a quick video tutorial on how to set up TOL appointment reminders, click [here](#).

TOL provides secure and convenient access to military hospital and clinic appointing, prescription refill and DOD Blue Button personal health data services. For more information about TOL visit [www.tricareonline.com](http://www.tricareonline.com). (Courtesy of TRICARE News)



## Special Events

# VA Summer Sports Clinic deadline soon

The deadline for registering for the Veterans Affairs Summer Sports Clinic is May 1.

This clinic offers adventure sports and recreational activities such as sailing, surfing, track and field events, kayaking and cycling (hand and tandem), to injured veterans. It shares a glimpse of the many exciting recreational opportunities awaiting those veterans who accept the challenge.

With the variety of water and summer sports available at the clinic, this weeklong journey hosts veterans from all over the country who have a variety of injuries, ranging from traumatic brain injury and polytrauma, to spinal cord injury or loss of limb. Its fundamental purpose is to provide early intervention for veterans battling back from injury, not only strengthening their bodies but overcoming and improving their overall being and self-worth.

For more information, click [here](#).



The Air Force Wounded Warrior program offers several social media outlets for people to learn more about the program and communicate with each other. Just click on an icon:



## Do you need to update your contact information?

**NOTE - Updates should be provided to: AFW2 Program Office, AFPC Disabilities Branch, DEERS, DFAS, and the VA.**

AFW2 Program Office – Call **800-581-9437** or via email: [wounded.warrior@us.af.mil](mailto:wounded.warrior@us.af.mil)

AFPC Disabilities Branch for people on the Temporary Disability Retired List – Email [disability@us.af.mil](mailto:disability@us.af.mil)

Based on the last four digits of your Social Security number, call:

(0001-2499) **210-565-5561** (2500-4999) **210-565-5564** (5000-7499) **210-565-5562** (7500-9999) **210-565-5660**

DEERS – Updating info in DEERS is accomplished in one of three ways:

Call **800-538-9552**

Visit a military base ID card issuance facility

Visit the website at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/faces/index.jspx?>

DFAS – Online at “myPay” website: <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

VA – Call **800-827-1000** or visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) for the nearest VA office



